

Early Vancouver

Volume One

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

2011 Edition (Originally Published 1932)

Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1931-1932.

*A Collection of Historical Data, Maps, and Plans Made with the Assistance of
Pioneers of Vancouver Between March and December 1931.*

About the 2011 Edition

The 2011 edition is a transcription of the original work collected and published by Major Matthews. Handwritten marginalia and corrections Matthews made to his text over the years have been incorporated and some typographical errors have been corrected, but no other editorial work has been undertaken. The edition and its online presentation was produced by the City of Vancouver Archives to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

Copyright Statement

© 2011 City of Vancouver. Any or all of *Early Vancouver* may be used without restriction as to the nature or purpose of the use, even if that use is for commercial purposes. You may copy, distribute, adapt and transmit the work. It is required that a link or attribution be made to the City of Vancouver.

Reproductions

High resolution versions of any graphic items in *Early Vancouver* are available. A fee may apply.

Citing Information

When referencing the 2011 edition of *Early Vancouver*, please cite the page number that appears at the bottom of the page in the PDF version only, not the page number indicated by your PDF reader. Here are samples of how to cite this source:

Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9
604.736.8561
archives@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/archives



11 DECEMBER 1931 - GROVE CRESCENT, FALSE CREEK. FIRST CITY HALL. INDIANS. EARLY MAPS OF VANCOUVER.

The following interesting letter, dated from San Diego, California, 5 December 1931, where he was wintering, comes from Mr. E.B. Sentell. Omitting the introduction, it reads:

Grove Crescent was not my first place of pioneering. With two brothers, A.J. and F.W. Sentell, I came from Granite Creek Mining Camp, and arrived in Vancouver in August 1886, and the following September built Vancouver's first City Hall, on Powell Street, now removed. It was midway between Columbia and Main Street.

The first house of our own was opposite the Powell Street Square, Cordova Street, in the 400 block, and is still there and is shown in one of the more ancient views of Vancouver.

I purchased Grove Crescent for my brother A.J. and myself from the Vancouver Land and Improvement Company Limited; the late C.D. Rand was agent in January 1891. It was called Grove Crescent on city plans made by Engineer L.A. Hamilton, who made the city's first plans. (*Note: a large copy of this plan, dated 1885 and named "Townsite of Vancouver," is in Court House records.*)

It was covered with tall timbers, from two hundred to three hundred feet high, with underbrush so thick it was hard to get through, but, I should judge, was second growth under woods.

I never knew of it as more than a dense forest when we became its owners. The only person who could tell me of its former history was Mr. Neil Black, of Spuzzum, B.C., now dead. In 1905 Alfred and I were building a section house at that place, and the said Mr. Black had a store there, and was one of B.C.'s real pioneers in the days when Moodyville was the "whole cheese" for Burrard Inlet.

He told us our point (*Grove Crescent*) was, up to 1866, an Indian camp on False Creek, and was the spot where they had a medicine ditch, and was to them a favourite resort, and the land, when dug up, showed signs of a Siwash camp; vast deposits of clam shells, and marks of camp foundations which had been deserted.

In 1912 the Great Northern Railway folks expropriated the 109 Block, of which we owned the south part, facing the Crescent, Lots 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15, with a frontage on the Crescent of about 450 feet, for \$103,500 and is now all the railway yard of the G.N.R.

I expect to be home when the days lengthen.

(Signed) E.B. Sentell.

"There was nothing 'medicine' about it," said Professor Charles Hill-Tout of Mount Pleasant, probably the most eminent ethnologist versed in Indians of British Columbia living, when the "medicine ditch" reference was referred to him for explanation.

"The Indians made a regular custom of it, to get rid of a cold; it was a steam lodge. They built a lodge, put a fire in it and heated stones, then threw water on the hot stones, and the steam came off. It was a steam bath, a regular custom among them. Afterwards, the Indian threw cold water over himself."

Mr. W.F. Findlay (see Carter House) said, "It was a Turkish bath. Only sometimes the effect was worse than the ailment. Any hole in the ground of suitable shape would do, so long as it would hold water. Then they would throw hot stones in the water, and they got in under the cover they had, and the steam would give them a Turkish bath. The trouble was they had no place where they could cool off as in a modern Turkish bath."